

EXTRA SPECIAL EDITION

Parent Newsletter

Spring 2016 - 2017

Welcome to Edition 3 of the *Extra Special Edition* for the school year 2016-2017, the newsletter for exceptional parents of Calhoun County. Each issue contains information for parents who have children in the Exceptional Student Education (ESE) program in our district.

Inclusion

Highlights from IDEA

IDEA has a strong preference for educating students with disabilities in regular classes with appropriate aides and services. The general education classroom must be the first placement considered by the IEP team. Students with disabilities should be removed from the regular educational environment only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes, with the use of supplementary aides and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

Accessing the General Education Curriculum

Students with disabilities must have access to the general education curriculum. In Florida this means all students must receive instruction aligned with the Florida Standards which align directly with the Florida Statewide Assessment (FSA).

Students with disabilities access the general education through differentiated instructional methods, unique accommodations and support to enhance learning, curricular modification and assessment based upon the Florida Standards Assessment and the Florida Alternate Assessment.

Each student's individual Educational Plan (IEP) provides details about the supports and services that the student receives and indicates necessary accommodations or modifications .

What's the Difference Between Accommodations and Modifications?

Accommodations	Modifications
Change How students are taught and demonstrate what they have learned	Change What students are expected to learn and demonstrate
Are aligned with the Florida Standards Assessment	Are aligned with Florida Standards Access Points and the Florida Alternate Assessment

For more information about inclusion please contact one of our FDLRS PAEC FIN Consultants at caren.prichard@paec.org or mary.ziembra@paec.org.



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*“Well Done
is Better Than
Well Said”
- Benjamin
Franklin*



**CALHOUN COUNTY
SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Exceptional Student
Education
Calhoun County
School Board
20859 Central Ave. E
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850-674-5927
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EXTRA SPECIAL EDITION

McKay Scholarship Notice

CALHOUN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

RALPH YODER

Superintendent Of Schools

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March 6, 2017

Dear Parent or Guardian:

We would like to inform you that your child may be eligible to participate in the John M. McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program, commonly known as the McKay Scholarship Program. This program was created to provide educational options to parents of students with disabilities. Currently, more than 30,000 Florida students are participating in this program.

By participating in the McKay Scholarship Program, your student may be able to attend a different public school in your district, attend a public school in an adjacent district, or receive a scholarship to attend a participating private school.

To be eligible for the McKay Scholarship Program, a student must apply for the program prior to withdrawing from public school. The student must have an Individual Education Plan (IEP), or 504 Accommodation Plan issued under s. 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (with duration of more than six months), and

- Have been enrolled and reported for funding in a Florida public school for the school year prior to applying for a scholarship (Grades K-12); or
- Have been a pre-kindergarten student who was enrolled and reported for funding in a Florida public school during the school year prior to applying for a scholarship; or
- Have received specialized instructional services under the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program from an approved provider pursuant to s. 1002.66 during the previous school year; or
- Have attended the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind during the preceding school year's student membership surveys (Grades K-12).

To find out if your student is eligible, you may apply for the McKay Scholarship Program on the School Choice website at www.floridaschoolchoice.org. Select the McKay Scholarships link, then Parents, and then the link titled Apply for a McKay Scholarship.

To learn more about your child's educational options, please contact your school district's Exceptional Student Education Office at 850-674-8734. You may also contact the Department of Education, Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice Information Hotline at 1-800-447-1636, or visit the School Choice website at www.floridaschoolchoice.org and click the McKay Scholarships link.

In order for a student to be eligible for the program, intent to participate in the McKay Scholarship Program must be filed on the School Choice website prior to withdrawing from public school.

The deadline to apply for the first payment period of the 2017-18 school year is July 3, 2017.

Please note this letter serves to notify you that your child may be eligible to participate in the McKay Scholarship Program. This letter does not guarantee your student's eligibility.

Sincerely,



Ralph Yoder
Superintendent of Schools

Danny Ryals

District 1

Ray Howell

District 2

Tim Smith

District 3

Kenneth Speights

District 4

Danny Hassig

District 5

Florida Students Achieve Website

The Florida Department of Education unveiled a new website that will help Florida families make critical education decisions by enabling them to access school and district-level data and will better inform families about the state's college and career ready standards and the quality of learning taking place in their students' classrooms. The website is live at www.FloridaStudentsAchieve.org.

"We take great pride in the fact that Florida leads the nation in school choice and student performance," Education Commissioner Pam Stewart said. "Through the Florida Students Achieve website, we provide a central location where parents and families can access the information they need to make the best education decisions for their students. It is my hope that all Floridians will take advantage of this tremendous resource."

One of the website's primary functions is the school performance search tool, which ultimately enables parents to search by district, zip code, city or other geographic data view and then compare school and district data.

In addition to performance data, the site provides information relevant to current and future students of all ages and includes easy-to-find information about the Florida Standards, school and district performance results in core subjects, educator effectiveness and graduation and postsecondary statistics.

Thanks in large part to its business-friendly climate, companies from around the nation have moved their headquarters to Florida; more than 1.1 million private sector jobs have been created; and the state's unemployment rate has continually dropped. Another benefit to the Florida Students Achieve website is that it can be a helpful tool for anyone interested in moving to Florida.

For more information about the Florida Department of Education, visit www.fldoe.org.

Family Cafe

The Family Café' invites you to attend Florida's premier event for people with disabilities, The Annual Family Café'!

This year's **19th Annual Family Café'** will be held on **June 16-18, 2017** in Orlando. Online registration is now open.

Since 1998, The Annual Family Café' has brought together thousands of individuals with disabilities and their family members for three days of information, training and networking each June. With a great range of individual breakout sessions, a packed Exhibit Hall with dozens of vendors, and a series of special events including Keynote speakers and The Governors' Summit on Disabilities, The Annual Family Café offers families exposure to a wide range of public and private resources, opportunities to find support by networking with other families, and unprecedented access to policy-making officials.

The **location** for this year's event will once again be the Hyatt Regency Orlando. The Family Café has negotiated a special conference rate of \$119 per night for rooms in The Family Café block. To make a reservation, contact the Hyatt Regency Orlando at 1-888-421-1442, and make sure to mention The 19th Annual Family Café.

The Family Café' remains committed to connecting attendees with information and resources at minimal cost, so there is no registration fee for individuals with disabilities and their family members.

The Family Café' is offering **limited financial assistance** to attendees to cover the cost of their hotel stay. To request financial assistance, simply note your request on the registration form. Recipients will be **selected by lottery**, and notified of their status in April.

The 19th Annual Family Café' promises to be a truly remarkable event for Floridians with disabilities and their families, and we very much hope you will be able to attend!

You can find a pdf version of this year's registration form as well as more information at www.familycafe.net

Parent Survey - Exceptional Student Education

Parents - We Need Your Voice Heard!

The Florida Department of Education is working with school districts to gather information on how well parents think their child's school is partnering with parents of students with disabilities, and would like to include your input. Your responses will help guide efforts to improve services and results for children and families. This survey is for parents of students with individual educational plans (IEP) receiving special education services during the 2016-17 school year. All information provided will remain confidential.

The survey was sent home with your child in February. If you have not mailed it using the returned envelope enclosed please complete the web-based survey as soon as possible. It is online at <http://www.esesurvey.com>. If you have already mailed your survey back, it is not needed for you to do the online survey too. We appreciate the feedback that you give us. It helps the state and our school district to continue improving educational programs for children with special needs. Thank you!!!

Parent/Guardian Webinar Series

The Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS) is excited to announce this 5 part webinar series for parent(s)/guardian(s) to explore the world of Exceptional Student Education (ESE).

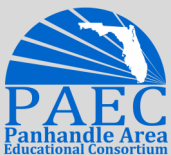
Each webinar will be held via Adobe Connect. The link to the Adobe room and a conference call line will be sent the week prior to the webinar to all who register.

All webinars will be held from 9:00 a.m.—10:00 a.m. CST.

To register please go to www.goo.gl/QwSZdj

Date	Webinar Topic
March 31, 2017	Understanding the World of Exceptional Student Education
April 28, 2017	Understanding the Individual Education Plan (IEP)
May 12, 2017	Instructional Practices
May 19, 2017	Connecting Families with Agencies and Other Resources
June 9, 2017	Family School and Partnerships

For more information please contact 386-312-2265



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Serving Bay, Calhoun, Franklin, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty, Walton, and Washington counties



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